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ABSTRACT

To accomplish needed reform in education, this author recommends that a combination of purposes must be pursued; these involve the four major elements constituting an educational context, which are characterized as pattern, preparation, practice, and "compaction." Pattern is defined as all aspects of the structure and configuration of programing and roles represented at all levels of the educational spectrum, from courses, equipment, and teachers to yellow buses. Preparation is described as an element similar to pattern; the author explains that it requires that a particular pattern be involved and that it become preparation as it moves from common schools to postsecondary experiences. Practice, according to the author, is related to preparation in the same way preparation is related to pattern; it has to do with doing well what one was prepared to do. The author describes "compaction" as involving educators' unifying around what they agree on. The paper concludes that one aid in accomplishing needed educational reform is the teaching doctorate. This would be a six-year teacher training program, with three years of liberal arts studies and three years of education studies, that would make teacher education programs professional programs. (Author/JM)

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THE EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONS: PREPARATION AND PRACTICE

William Monahan

The great Benjamin Disraeli once said: "Man is not the creature of circumstances. Circumstances are the creatures of man." I think to rather a large extent this applies quite nicely to the current scene so far as education is concerned. Those of us who claim to be professional educators have tended for too long to behave as if we must react to conditions without giving enough thought to how we can affect those conditions.

Presently, we find ourselves in an increasingly acute situation—we are the target of criticism from all directions and by all manner of constituents. The most recent Gallup Poll lists among the top five problems: lack of discipline (1), poor curriculum/poor standards (3), and difficulty of getting good teachers (5). As a matter of fact, the first ten problems mentioned most often by respondents to the poll reflect for the seventh year in a row a continuing decline in public confidence and public support. Why?

The Contextual Explanation

It is not difficult to explain the nature of this situation which some doomsayers have called the coming death of public education. Like the rumors regarding Mark Twain's untimely demise, these rumors are a bit premature, but the fact remains that the public mass educational system that we have nurtured, fostered, developed, and fought for is in trouble and is ripe for some unification and reform—and I think that unification and reform are intimately related.

Any comments related to our situation first of all need to be prefaced by reasserting a truism—we have done such a good job in the organization and administration of public mass education that most people take it for granted. It always gets a little under the skin of career school people when they are made to endure long soliloquies from critics about the numerous inadequacies of the schools. Anyone even remotely familiar with a little of our history knows that our mass education system is of quite recent origin and has never enjoyed any guarantee of permanence. Public schools have not been a reality much longer than the airplane. As a matter of fact, the final stage in the development of a public education system, free and compulsory education, dates from about the time of the Kalamazoo decision in Michigan in 1874, which legalized property taxation in support of high schools. It took another twenty or so years before high schools became relatively common, and by then the airplane was already a reality. People now tend to take both inventions pretty much for granted although the cost per square foot of a wide-bodied jet is about seven hundred times greater than the cost per square foot of a schoolhouse (or about $70,000!).

There is a principle involved here which holds that when some civic function is institutionalized and an entire infrasystem is established to support and nourish it, that activity will almost inevitably become routinized and mostly unattended except when it is perceived to be severely dysfunctional.

It is my conviction that this principle is manifested by the kind of general concerns and so-called problems which, in the larger measure, characterize the criticisms of schools in most local communities. Although such difficulties seem quite terrible to those who experience them (and understandably so), they are mostly rather trivial concerns when compared to the problems associated with establishing a system of common schools in the first place. Certainly issues such as what kind of books and instructional materials should be allowed in schools, whether there is or is not too much "junk food," the control of behavior in the classroom, whether we give too much attention to extracurricular activities at the expense of "academics" (a curious neologism when you think on it), and whether we should or should not invent statistical attendance areas for purposes of racial integration and then bus children into and out of these—all of these kinds of problems, whether of great or small consequence, are nevertheless problems which are generated by the *vitality* of the public education idea. In other words, such problems *presume* a public school system.

In the past few years some other issues have begun to be raised which seem to me to signal a much more ultimate danger. I refer to such initiatives as tuition tax credits, referenda that result in explicit taxing limits or reductions for schools, and the proliferation of private sytems of schools as both a racist alternative to desegregated systems and as genuinely perceived alternatives to inferior public education. These are only a few of the kinds of initiatives involved in this new and more intensely elevated criticism of schools.

In the face of this circumstance, school people are frequently exhorted to accentuate the positives, to tell the great unwashed about the marvelous achievements of the public schools. I truly believe that even a massive effort to launch a "good news" offensive would be a great waste of energy and money. It would make us feel better, but I think that it would be addressing the wrong problem.

EA 014 455

A Need for Some Reforms

Anyone who has spent a good deal of his or her productive life in the field of public education has seen criticisms come and go and some return again. To a large extent, I like to point out to people that the reasons for this are not because we neglected many of those problems that our critics got after us about twenty years ago, but that it is the nature of a public enterprise like education for crises to happen again and again—maybe not quite in precisely the same way and certainly not typically in the same place. But when the enterprise is as grand as is the public education system, it is inevitable that it is going to have a spot or two that quite frequently needs attending. What the professional educator comes easily to understand is that the system has always been in one kind of trouble or another, and it probably always will be. In the process, however, it has generally always tended to get better and better because the people who supported it believed in it and knew what it was capable of achieving. In that regard, public information was, is, and always will be important. We will always need experts to help us influence public opinion and convince our patrons, politicians, and the public at large that what we are up against is stupendous, and with their help, by God, we'll give old Horace Mann his victory for humanity!

I believe we—like any other terribly large and complex institutionalized system—will always need (more or less) that kind of help. But I think that kind of help is not enough to get us through the current and much graver impending crisis. Let me take just a few words to try and characterize the nature of that crisis as I perceive it. I truly believe that the crisis dictates an urgent need for the serious consideration of some important reforms and that such reforms not only must be explored by all aspects of the educating professions but that the process must begin soon.

The Contemporary Crisis in Public Education

There is a contemporary crisis in public education that I am convinced is more intense and more deep-seated that any we have witnessed since the early years of historic efforts to establish the public school system in the United States. It is not easy to characterize the dimensions of this crisis in simple language for it is complex, and a part of its reality is in the effective dimensions of attitude that people bring to youth-serving organizations. For the schools, the attitude or feeling of increasing frustration is not dissimilar to the feelings of angry helplessness when one must again and again have some appliance, or the car, or the lawnmower repaired. It is a crisis of competence, and it spills over into many other aspects of that part of the American productive culture that the late Talcott Parsons categorized as "instrumental" behaviors; that is, those activities within our society that keep the whole business functioning at all. To a large measure then, the lack of confidence in the schools is both consequent and antecedent of the lack of confidence in the destiny of America and in the increasingly obscured fantasy of the great American dream as also consequent and antecedent of the growth of a bureaucratic welfare state. Now all of that might be a terrible oversimplification, but suffice to say that so far as the attitudinal component of the crisis is concerned, the lack of confidence in the public schools is only partially the result of anything empirically verified in the experiences of those who express it, as for example, something unfortunate that has happened to themselves or to their own. It is also very much comprised of a more generalized attitudinal component that reflects dramatic changes in the American institutional culture itself, on the one hand, and in a little of that same ailment which attacks all of us as we grow older, on the other—some hardening of this society's arteries. The older we get as a culture, the more fragile become our institutions.

But this crisis is comprised of more than that, of course; it also has a substantive base, and as I mentioned before, this substantive base of problems contributes to the attitudinal component in quite important and obvious ways.

First of all, there is simply no argument with the assertion that in certain areas of knowledge and analysis, many young people are doing much more poorly than their counterparts of a previous generation. Now you will notice that I said "young people"—I did not say that *schools* are doing more poorly. Maybe they are. Nor did I say teachers are doing more poorly, even though I believe they are, because I have seen some research that seems to conclude that. Nevertheless, the most widely accepted basis upon which to judge performance—the ubiquitous standardized test—measures *student* performance, not the performance of schools or teachers. That is probably as it should be, since schools probably do not deserve all of the blame for whatever happens in the life of a child, nor do they deserve all of the credit. The largest and presumably best of the three high schools in my own town takes a great deal of pride in the number of National Merit Scholar semifinalists that it produces every year, and yet I have the private suspicion that more than ninety percent of those youngsters would be national finalists no matter where they attended high school.[1]

What the school does for (or to) the incipient talent is not nearly so easy to characterize in 1981 as it would have been in 1941. Granted that there are a great many more and different kinds of persons in schools now than 40 years ago due to social class, handicaps, working habits, law, the economy, and who knows what else, the fact remains that the school is decidedly different. There are many reasons. Certainly, the school has been required to take on things that it is really not equipped to do very well. Schools are not very well equipped, for example, to act as drug detoxification centers, and yet in some places and under some circumstances, schools are expected to be that. But all of that notwithstanding, schools—as unique cultural inventions serving the purpose of preparing young people to assume adult roles in the community—are not perceived as doing as well, and young people are not doing as well in them as they have done at almost any other time in the past. I don't really know whether these circumstances can be turned around. Before that can happen, in any case, I think schools must somehow be viewed more realistically by citizens who have distorted notions about educational functions and power. But at the same time, I am convinced that there is a combination of purposes which I think we must pursue, and attainment will unquestionably make for remarkable advances in productivity and attitudinal support. I refer to a quartet of major interests or elements, which altogether constitute an educational context—preparation, practice, pattern, and compaction—perhaps not the best of terms but good enough to represent the several important pieces of the context.

The Educational Context

There is no special ordering of the elements or the discussion of them. In other words, one element doesn't necessarily always come before another. It is also important for me to mention that in the analysis of any one of the elements there are a great many additional subcomponents that might deserve analysis at some point or another. But for purposes of this particular discussion, let me merely suggest a brief definition of the function of each element and then follow with a proposition which might help us to achieve its desired effect.

Pattern

By "pattern" I refer to all aspects of the structure and the configuration of programming and roles that are represented at all levels of the educational spectrum: courses, credits, schedules, equipment, supplies, students, teachers, administrators, coun-

selors, buildings and fields, yellow buses and recess, bowl games and dormitories. In other words, "pattern" has to do with the idea of structure or system rather than the idea of organism. To some extent, this is the issue raised by Herbert Spencer at the turn of the century when he posed the problem of whether society was an aggregate—"...a collective name for a number of individuals . . . (implying) persistence of arrangement among them throughout the area occupied . . . "—or whether it is organismic. He went on to ask whether ". . . the attributes of a society (are) in any way like those of a not-living body (or) in any way like those of a living body?"[2] We talk about the likelihood that standards are not rigorous enough, that teachers do not expect enough, or that the states through their departments of education do not demand enough of students in that they be required to endure at least as much as they elect to—all of those concerns about lowered standards and much else, I am characterizing as "pattern."

I do believe that there are important areas of pattern that we ought to give serious thought to in regard to reform. For example, I think we need to give some attention and lively discussion to whether the present pattern—or at least some quite easily defined parts of it, such as units of work required for high school graduation—is appropriate to contemporary times. There is much of that kind of discussion under way at this moment and in thousands of school districts, and I think that is all to the good. If a youngster intends to continue his education after high school, and that education is anticipated to involve some exposure to the liberal arts and/or toward some professional interest, then by all means that youngster should be required to endure more than one required unit in mathematics. Whether one not inclined to college should have such requirements or whether one is capable of profiting more from such study than from some other alternative is a much more difficult question to contemplate. In such cases, much clearly depends on how wise some people are; people who know enough about the young person *and* the pattern. But that certainly is not a new need either.

Preparation

"Preparation" is an element in the context that is very similar to pattern—it requires that a particular pattern be involved, and it becomes "preparation" as it moves from the area of the common schools (basic fundamentals) to postsecondary experiences. Preparation is a special application of the pattern. In the shaping of the education of any kind of professional, the nature of the pattern of preparation as well as access to it, competence in the performance of its aims, and a willingness for some representative authority to certify rights of practice are important parts of the particular pattern. In the educating professions, there has not been much change in the preparation pattern for 50 years; in teaching itself, almost no change at all. Among school administrators, there has been a rather remarkable advancement in *self-imposed* preparation beyond which the rights of practice, minimal requirements specify. Thus among that particular segment of the educating profession, there has been more, rather than less, change than has been appropriate. But among teachers? It was about 1930 that the idea of a four-year baccalaureate degree was being accepted as a reasonable and defensible standard. It wasn't until after World War II that any such standard approached realization. The history of the effort to ensure that the great majority of American children would have the benefit of a minimally trained teacher in public school classrooms is a remarkable manifestation of the "too little, too late" principle that Allen Nevins made something of in one of his history books. The problem is that by the time most of the teaching personnel were presumed to have achieved that minimal level of preparation, it was no longer even minimal—just inadequate.

Practice

"Practice" is related to preparation in the same way that preparation is related to pattern; practice has to do with doing—responsibly and effectively—what it was one was prepared to do, and within a pattern that one both understands and exercises some control over. The entire basis for preparation and for pattern is effective practice. Practice involves, or ought to involve, the impact of research and inquiry, doctoral theses, new books and gadgets, and personnel policies; it has everything to do with everything, with whether a building is well maintained or the football team does well or poorly—all of it is ultimately related to effective practice. But consider that if the preparation is inadequate—if the pattern related to preparation is dysfunctional—then how is it going to be possible except for the very remote random good fortune of chance for practice to be effective? A very important aspect of the dysfunctional aspects of practice is a situation in which the technical-level practitioner is much less well prepared than is the person whose preparation is not only presumably based on a record of effective practice but specialized preparation on top of that. A principal, for example, is such a person who is a presumably adequate practitioner at one level who must work with and depend significantly upon inadequately prepared practitioners at the other.

And What of Compaction?

"Compaction" is an awkward term—there are probably many better ones: coherence, unification, cohesion, inseparability, or solidarity. The point is however that compaction adds parts of a notion that goes a little beyond the singular idea of solidarity. It adds the very important concept of an *arrangement*—an agreement, or a contract—that is truly essential to the importance of the fundamental power of the concept of the *professional*. Ours has too long been a fragmented, disconnected, and discrete collectivity of specializations. Each of us has been reasonably essential to all of the others, though some of us more and less. But there has not been much about us that would strike anyone as conveying the idea of unity and interdependent complementarity. On the contrary, we have developed and managed with a seemingly functional division of labor with uneasy boundaries of trust and acceptability. We have managed because what little common theory there is that really binds us to pedagogical technology (and we must have more and better theory) is decidedly humanistic, and we are at least civil to each other. But mostly we have been primitively willing to go our various ways, not only rather oblivious of each other but almost as if any of us can exist without the others. In the ultimate analysis, only the teacher is truly essential, and though teachers have always suspected the truth of that, they seem to have done so only dimly. A modern industrial culture—even an emerging one—requires pedagogical specialists of some sort or another. We are at about that time in the evolution of our occupations in all of the concerns of education where we should agree that we all ought to begin with a generally common pattern of preparation, exercise that pattern in enlightened practice, and join together as part of a generalized profession. Perhaps it is time for us to quit squabbling about our differences and our scar tissue and start emphasizing what we agree on.

A Potential Model

Since 1977, I have been talking about a training pattern that will help us do some of the things I've mentioned. We call it the Teaching Doctorate (T.D.). It is very similar to the J.D. in law and the Pharm.D. in pharmacy. It will require an initial preparation period of six years, the first three of which will be primarily in the liberal arts. Much of the criticism that we hear currently is that we

do not do well enough in the content areas, simply because there is so much more to know in any field or area that may be demonstrably true. The T.D. offers a series of patterns depending on the level of practice—preschool, elementary, middle, secondary, and so forth. After the third year, one gains formal admission to the education unit and begins the preparatory year. This is the year in which one becomes immersed in the didactics and some clinical activity related to teaching. Although we would feel pretty good about the subject-matter mastery after three liberal arts years, students would still be involved with their disciplines, particularly as they experiment with ways of transmitting subject-matter content more effectively. But there is something else that is vital. Recently, I heard the state superintendent of schools in Alabama observe that in all of his years of experience in school work, he had never known of a teacher who failed because he or she did not know the subject matter. Perhaps that is too strong a statement for some, but the point impressed me. As I thought about it, I too remembered many a teacher who couldn't handle the pedagogical encounter, not the difficulties of solving an equation.

The T.D. would strive to eliminate the master's degree as we have tended to use (or, perhaps abuse) it—that is, as an add-on for ameliorating the inadequacies of prior preparation. Law schools seldom talk about master's degrees, and medical schools do not have such degrees. The point is that when persons talk about our "undergraduate" programs, what we need to be able to say to them is: "What undergraduate programs? We have professional programs—they are not undergraduate and they are not graduate."

We can say that we do indeed have *advanced* graduate programs—Ed.D.'s or Ph.D.'s. Such degrees are for the advanced pursuit of explicit scholarly inquiry and for fine tuning professional preparation so that we can continue to bring the very best minds, pliable with confidence, into the study and advancement of teaching. In that fashion, administrators would complete the T.D. like everyone else, practice, and then move on into administration. Reading specialists, psychometricians, or anyone else within the professional family whose practice occurred elsewhere than directly in a classroom would also complete this sequence. These specialists would go on for their specialized training as do any other professionals—not with M.A. degrees and additional diplomas, but by special professional licenses issued as a consequence of completing further certified work. With that will come a very powerful compaction; for the first time ever, we would control our own total destiny. More than two million of us!

1. As a matter of fact, if you want to make a neat little study, you could check to see how many national finalists graduated from high schools in "academic" communities; that is, check to see how many of them grew up in a community with a college or a university. Don't bother. I can tell you, it is very high. Parent's occupation is still as good a predictor of success in academic work as is the high school from which one graduates. That is because either directly or indirectly, such youngsters learn very quickly that certain standards of performance are expected of them and that in order to achieve those standards certain resources are available. The expectation is a powerful force in shaping such young persons' behavior and study habits, and they tend almost to presume that they will do as people in that community do, just as the child of a farmer is very likely to presume that he may lead a similar life.
2. Herbert Spencer, "The Nature of Society" in Talcott Parsons, et al. *Theories of Society* (New York: Free Press, 1961), p. 140.

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